THE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

catalog 9

WAGNER'S TEACHINGS BY ANALOGY.

Prose Works of Richard Wagner.

Uniform with this Volume.

OPERA AND DRAMA. (Oper und Drama.) Englished from the Original German. By EDWIN EVANS, *Senior*. 1, Opera and the Essence of Music: 2, The Stage-Play and Dramatical Poetic Art in the Abstract; 3, Poetry and Music in the Drama of the Future. The three parts in two volumes. Portrait. 2 vols. Cr. 8vo, cloth, 10s. *net.*

JUDAISM IN MUSIC. Being the Original Essay together with the Later Supplement. Translated from the German (Das Judenthum in der Musik) and Furnished with Notes and Introduction. By E. EVANS, *Senior*. Cr. 8vo, 3s. 6d. *net.*

ON CONDUCTING. Translated by E. DANNREUTHER. Second Edition. Cr. 8vo, 5s. *net.*

BEETHOVEN. With a Supplement from the Philosophical Works of Schopenhauer. Trans. by EDWARD DANNREUTHER. Third Edition. Cr. 8vo, 6s. *net.*

MY RECOLLECTIONS OF RICHARD WAGNER. By AUGUST LESIMPLE. Post 8vo, cloth, 2s. *net* (paper covers, 1s. *net*).

HANDBOOK TO THE VOCAL WORKS OF BRAHMS. An Historical, Descriptive and Analytical Account of the Entire Works of Johannes Brahms. Treated in the Order of their Opus Number. Preceded by a Didactic Section and followed by Copious Tables of Reference. For the Use of Concert-Goers, Pianists, Singers and Students. By EDWIN EVANS, *Senior*. Thick 8vo, cloth, 10s. *net.*

THE RISE OF MUSIC. An Inquiry into the Development of the Art from its Primitive Putting Forth in Egypt and Assyria to its Triumphant Consummation in Modern Effect. By JOSEPH GODDARD. With numerous Illustrations. Cr. 8vo, 7s. 6d. *net.*

THE POST-BEETHOVEN SYMPHONISTS. Critical Essays on Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Tchaïkovsky, Berlioz, Liszt, Strauss and Others. Translated from the Second German Edition. By ARTHUR BLES. With Twelve Portraits. Cr. 8vo, cloth, gilt top, 6s. *net.*

LONDON:
WILLIAM REEVES, 83 CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF WAGNER'S PROSE WORKS

ML
410
.W13
E9

WAGNER'S TEACHINGS BY ANALOGY

HIS VIEWS ON ABSOLUTE MUSIC AND OF THE RELATIONS OF ARTICULATE AND TONAL SPEECH, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO "OPERA AND DRAMA"

A SERIES OF PAPERS FOR THE STUDENT

BY

EDWIN EVANS, SENR., F.R.C.O.

Author of "Handbook to the Vocal Works of Brahms," "Modal Accompaniment of Plain Chant," "How to Compose Within the Lyric Form," translator of Richard Wagner's "Opera and Drama," "Judaism in Music," etc.

LONDON:
WILLIAM REEVES, 83 CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.

Printed by The New Temple Press, 17 Grant Road, Croydon.

THE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO UTAH

PREFACE.

THAT the Prose Writings of Wagner are at present undervalued is patent to all whose research enables them to take a general view of the questions involved; but, though the commanding interest attaching to this great composer's musical creations stands of course principally in the way of a full appreciation of his literary output, there is a further cause for this result—though one which in the case of the English student at least is only effective because up to the present an insufficient amount of attention has been directed to it.

The cause alluded to (independently of the mere difference of language which naturally involves translation and all the customary obscurities attending that operation) lies principally in Wagner's complicated literary style; which renders the perusal of his works difficult even to Germans and either compels the translator to indulge in paraphrase or to adopt an English dress of un-English and therefore of baffling and deterrent, character.

What the student requires is to be led on by easy stages to the contemplation of Wagner problems—to be in the first place frankly amused; relying that if once that step can be effectively taken, there need be little fear of the interest aroused being allowed to droop. In the present pages therefore the attraction has been selected of those charming analogies by which Wagner had the habit of supporting his reasoning—analogies which subtly bring home to the mind the author's underlying thought, and which as it were insinuate instruction without compelling the reader to any labour in its acquirement.

It should be added that if, towards the end of the book, a slight further step has been ventured this is merely to enable the reader to test his own advancement, and yield him the consolation of feeling himself prepared for the enjoyment of Wagner's writings generally.

EDWIN EVANS, SENIOR.

CONTENTS.

I.

THEORETICAL SUBJECTS.

PAGE

(A) His Views of Modulation and Complex Harmony 1

Analogies :

Beethoven and Columbus 3

The circle of keys and the old tribal families 4

The absolute musician and the layman 6

(B) His Views of the Relative Vocations of Melody and Harmony 8

Analogies :

The two wanderers 9

The melodic skiff and the mountain lake 12

Melody and its perpendicular chain 14

Melody and the human body 14

II.

OPERATIC SUBJECTS.

PAGE

(A) Analogies Relating to the Aria and Folk-Tune ... 16

Analogies :

The man of luxury and the folk-tune 18

Rossini and the flower extract 19

Rossini and the melody-hunters 20

Weber and the folk-flower of the meadows 22

(B) Analogies Relating to Weber, Mozart and the Shakespeare Drama 24

Analogies :

Weber and the dying folk-flower 24

Shakespeare and the "open door" 27

Mozart and the water-mirror 29

Berlioz and his "mechanics" 31

(C) Analogies Relating to Meyerbeer, Rossini and Opera in General 31

Analogies :

Meyerbeer and his "tinsel-towers" 32

The hero champion and the rising sun 33

Meyerbeer and the "opera-coach" 34

The starling and the plough 35

Rossini opera and the Byzantine Empire 36

The operatic "landlord and tenant" 37

III.

WAGNER AND ABSOLUTE MUSIC.

PAGE

His Views Considered in Relation to a Higher Musical Problem 39

(a) The problem stated—Wagner's limitations of absolute music—Wagner as author of the new incentive—The operatic aria in all aspects—The absolute musician and his pretentions—Tonal aspirations in the direction of thought—The "masculine" vocation of music 39

(b) The "inner contradiction" of operatic art—Weber and the libretto of "Euryanthe"—Wagner's criticism of modern articulate speech—Absolute music as Wagner's *bête noire*—Beethoven's intentions in the Ninth Symphony—Beethoven's procedure in developing the resources of absolute music 47

(c) Beethoven and the "parting of the ways"—The use and abuse of absolute music—Wagner and "tone painting"—Wagner and fantasy—Summing up of the higher musical problem 55

IV.

WAGNER AND THE POET.

His Views of the Evolution of Speech 63

(a) The comparison of tonal with articulate speech—Equalisation of conditions—Gesture as contributory to

PAGE

the effect of speech—The evolution of articulate as compared with that of tonal speech—The "consonantal clothing" of the vowel 63

(b) Temporary parallel courses of articulate and tonal speech—Conditions which regulate the precision of articulate speech—The origin of alliteration—Respective appeals of ordinary and tonal speech—Application of the Wagner reasoning to tonal speech—Sequence the equivalent of alliteration—The borrowings from music of articulate speech—The degeneracy of modern speech and consequent end to comparison—Later independent course of ordinary speech—Future of the tonal language ... 70

WAGNER'S TEACHINGS BY ANALOGY.

I.

THEORETICAL SUBJECTS.

(A) HIS VIEWS OF MODULATION AND COMPLEX HARMONY.

THERE can be no better means of improvement for the student of musical composition than a profound study of Richard Wagner; but the study in order to produce its full effect must extend beyond Wagner the musician, to Wagner the philosopher and critic: beyond the artist to the man. Its foundation must therefore be so laid as to embrace, in addition to the *musical*, at least something of the *prose* works; and, however much the special hindrances to this may be admitted or stand to be regretted the harm only begins when they are made excuse either for neglect of, or complaint against the works themselves. No student has ever dived deeply into the latter without finding himself amply repaid; and, even though the

style of writing may occasionally affect the reader as being somewhat heavy, this is not only due to a condensation which we ought to prize, but also appertains to the metaphysical style of diction usual with German thinkers, and in respect of which therefore Wagner requires no justification.

It may be feared, however, that reminders of this kind will scarcely do much towards removing the English student's objection to what he is like to call the "forbidding" aspect of Wagner literature; and that, unless some temptation be offered him to penetrate its surface, it may remain for a long time yet neglected. It is with the object of providing this temptation that we shall now try to show something of its real attraction; and in the first instance by selecting some of Wagner's *teachings by analogy*, and applying them in terms congenial to the English student's habit.

Earnestness in teaching creates a natural desire to draw comparisons into service; and Wagner's temperament therefore quite prepares us to expect from him some resort to the analogical method. This however is not quite the same thing as being called upon to realise that he carried the cultivation of this auxiliary to an extent which sometimes makes us wonder which was first in his mind—the theory itself, or the mental picture raised for its exposition.

The underlying causes of this peculiar love of analogy on Wagner's part may be traced to certain

features of his work; and, particularly, to the gradual development of artistic conception; which seemed to grow with him as he went and to cause him to feel the want of analogies *for the pointing of his own way*; a view which is confirmed by his confession to Uhlig that, by means of his literary work, "he became clear to himself." Wagner would not have been so severely criticised for ascribing error to Beethoven had his experiences been then as familiar to the world as they are now; his judgment of himself being so perfectly in keeping with the picture which he draws of Beethoven having exhausted the means of absolute music also without knowing whither he was going. The analogy by which Wagner explains this will afford the student a foretaste of such teaching.

He tells us that Beethoven's mistake was the same as that of Columbus; who, though only bent upon discovering a new way to India, was led by that endeavour to discover a world hitherto unknown; and, though he took that notion with him to the grave, making his companions confirm by an oath that the new world which they had seen was India—thus remaining in the toils of error—his accomplishment had none the less effect. It loosened the bandage from the world's eyes; taught men to recognise the true form of the earth; and revealed its unsuspected fullness of riches in the most unmistakable manner.

The loftiness of such conceptions may possibly tend to lessen their practical value; but, if we turn from

them to such applications of analogy as help to elucidate ordinary technical subjects, we find Wagner equally at home. How interesting, for example, is the account he gives of the mutual relation of tonalities; and of the true vocation of modulative means. We may search our treatises through and through without so well realising these subjects as we are enabled to do by following his charming analogy—in which it will best serve the reader's purpose if we start from the point where he describes how, prompted by the inclination of its individual members, the parent key shows an instinct to advance to a state of union with others. He regards the keys in this respect as "old tribal families" of the human race, the members of which loved to consider themselves as separate from the general species; but in whom sexual love as excited in the individual not by what was usual but by that to which it was unaccustomed, caused an overstepping of the tribal boundary, resulting in alliances with other families. The principal notes of a simple melody are like those individual members of one family; who, being youthful, are casting their longings from out the customary surroundings of the group, in search of an independence only to be gained by contact with some other individual lying outside the family bounds. This is attained by the maiden, only through love of the youth; and he, as the rising offspring of another family, attracts her—just in the same way as the tone, in overstepping the family circle

represented by its own key, assumes the character of one drawn to and determined by another.

The advanced student will instantly apply this; but, for the benefit of the ordinary pupil a suggestion may be useful. Let the second tetrachord of an ordinary major scale be accepted also as the first tetrachord of the next key in order; by which means a dual character will be mentally ascribed to each note. The leading note of the first will in that case be also mediant of the new, key, and serve therefore as an example of a youthful member of the family who is "casting his longings beyond the home-circle," and but awaiting the opportunity to unite himself with a neighbouring or modulative, tetrachord.

Full justice to the analogy would involve the use of melodic inflections, with examples in notation; but the simple application given should fix the reader's mood by enabling him to decide that, while Wagner's writings may be formidable in substance, they are most friendly in kind. The perfect Wagnerite knows of course that this could scarcely have been otherwise; for whatever others may choose to think he knows the master to have been a sworn foe of all unnecessary abstruseness. This is a fact which it may possibly serve the reader's interest to have straightway made clear by an illustration. No student can fail to be aware of the complexities of those superfine harmonic progressions which the musician's vanity causes him to introduce both in and out of season, and respecting

which it may be confessed on behalf of organists that they have something of a special weakness in that direction. But, though no man was ever better equipped for the transcendental use of such means, let us hear what Wagner has to say upon the point.

He tells us that modern music has developed itself to a great extent from harmony alone; that it has determined itself arbitrarily according to the endless fullness of possibilities which presented themselves before it, caused by changes of the ground-bass and the chords to which they give rise. But achievements in this direction have administered only to a sort of intellectual musical luxuriation in which our artists themselves have loved freely to indulge, but have not been able to induce the uninstructed layman to follow them. On such occasions the latter, being only concerned with the melody, could, in effect, only cry to the absolute musician:

"I do not understand your music: it is too learned for me."

Is this not true to nature? And have we not all heard that remark before—of course, variously expressed? Have not many of us even done something to provoke it? It may, at least, so be feared. And, if so, let us not merely hang our heads at this reproof of the great master of modern times but turn his teaching to practical account, the first stage in doing which is to realise the exact position which he assigned to Harmony, as one branch of musical material.

He describes it as a separate and individual organism: one not producing, but only bearing that poetical fruit the germ of which it has received; and in bearing which it forms it in accordance with its own special capabilities.

Harmony is here represented as a mere servant of the poetical intention; and, as such, forbidden ever to intrude. When increased richness of intention demands an increased richness of harmony—then, and then only, can the latter secure its legitimate effect. This is, however, not due to the harmony—considered as a separate element; but to an æsthetic agreement and co-operation in the attainment of a single aim by two artistic means. The simplest harmonisation of a Volkslied is also the noblest; because departure from simplicity in such a case creates a conflict between two elements which should be mutually helpful. Only when graduations in the warmth of the poetic intention are faithfully reflected by the harmony can artistic unity result.

These views (as comparatively elementary) form an appropriate foretaste of Wagner's teachings by analogy. In selecting them to begin with we yield to the necessity of proceeding by degrees when dealing with a master who was himself so methodical. This means therefore that the interest increases as we proceed; so that the reader who has so far found himself pleasurably engaged may rely upon not being disappointed with the higher analogies to follow.

(B) HIS VIEWS OF THE RELATIVE VOCATIONS OF MELODY AND HARMONY.

We left Wagner insisting upon agreement of character between harmony and poetic intention; and, in natural course, have now to pass on to his views of the relationship set up, when, instead of *with harmony*, we have to deal *with melodic inflections*. He first reminds us of a difference in the natural conditions; for, whereas harmony could only have been invented by the musician (and not by the poet) a certain kind of melody had already been independently discovered by the poet as an emanation of speech-verse. The consequence was that afterwards, when the musician, by the separate cultivation of his art, had brought absolute melody under control, the poet had the happy experience of finding an ideal realisation of what he had already mentally conceived; though, hitherto, without the power of bringing it to fruition. Yet, from the fact of this finished melody being merely the perfection of his own previous idea, the experience may be counted rather as a *re*-covery than a *dis*-covery.*

We need only vary this statement by describing the musician as having helped the poet to a perfection

* The terms here contrasted by Wagner are—*ge*-funden and *er*-funden; representing a type of witticism to which he was somewhat partial, and of which the effect depends upon interchange of prefix. It is interesting to note this habit, on account of its consistency with Wagner's love of alliteration.

which he could not otherwise attain; when, by reversing the terms, they become equally applicable to the helpfulness of poetry to the tonal language. Such is the position which Wagner takes up, and which he illustrates by representing the tonal language in the condition of finding its appeal *indefinite* without the poet's aid—a condition ultimately leading to the union presented in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

He puts it to us that, in this matter, the poet and musician resemble two wanderers; who start from a certain point, in order to proceed round the world in opposite directions. When half-way round they meet again, and talk matters over; when each tells the other of the wonders he has seen. The poet speaks of the plains, mountains and valleys; as well as of the strange beasts which he encountered in the course of his wanderings across the Continent. The musician, on the other hand, enlarges upon the wonders of that ocean upon which he has many a time been in danger of sinking; upon the horrible forms which it contains; and other marvels.

A mutual emotion resulting from these accounts, each one becomes seized with an irresistible desire to make acquaintance for himself with all that he has not so far actually seen; so they separate once more for the purpose of allowing each one to complete his journey round the world. At last they meet again; and, now that the poet has plodded through the seas, and that the musician has explored the Continents,

they separate no more. They are now united, by reason of one knowing and feeling what the other knows and feels. The poet is a musician and the musician a poet; both together they constitute the complete artistic human being.

Now, the conversation which took place after travel of the first hemisphere stands for the melody of which the utterance came from the poet's inmost longing; but of which the actual manifestation depended upon the musician's experience.

After the second parting the poet makes himself master of the musician's experience under guidance of the latter; who, having already boldly navigated the seas and found his way back to the mainland, gives him precise directions as to the course to take. Thus, the poet, upon betaking himself to the forbidding distances of harmony, discovers those regions to be no longer of pathless desert character. To his delight, on the contrary, he finds that the ship which the previous navigator had constructed for himself is contrived upon a plan marvellously venturous, exceptionally new and endlessly refined although of giant-like strength. Upon this accordingly he embarks, in order to set out securely upon his passage through the waves.

The musician had already taught him how to manage this ship: at the helm of which, thus proudly sailing through the waves, the poet, who had previously toiled to measure mountain and valley step by step, becomes delightfully conscious of the all-embracing power of

man. From his lofty station upon its deck the seething waves in all their might now appear to him simply as trusty, willing bearers of his noble destiny—the destiny of his poetic aim.

That ship is the powerful instrument rendering all things possible to his most ambitious and fervent desire; and his thankful ardent love goes forth to the musician who, having contrived it to battle with the stormy sea, now gives it over to his hand.

The beauty of the foregoing analogy will be appreciated in precisely the same degree as the reader is advanced in the art and practice of composition. There is scarcely an expression from end to end which does not intimately relate to actual and familiar situations, so as to be instantly capable of musical illustration; whilst, taken as a whole, and apart from its poetic loveliness, it is scarcely less than a compact treatise upon poetic and tonal relations.

Wagner is careful to explain that, when the orchestra as "lord of the harmonic flood is likened to a sea-ship, the terms *sea* and *ship* are to be understood as interchangeable: in the same way that we should consider "sea-passage" and "ship-passage" to mean the same thing. This stipulation is made in order to allow the same allegory to further accommodate itself to an elucidation of melody; Wagner reminding us in this connection that no object compared with another can ever be exactly like it in every particular—or, at least, only in the case of objects of mechanical formation.

As for those of organic character a difference in some one or other direction invariably occurs; and, on these grounds, he asks us, in the following application of the symbol, to lend ourselves to the idea of harmony as the *flood itself*; a flood which, in this instance, proves to be, not the ocean as previously, but the waters of a deep mountain lake, clearly illumined by the sunlight; and from each portion of the surface of which the surrounding coast is distinctly visible.

Out of the trunks of trees, which had grown upon the stony and primitive alluvial soil of the surrounding hills, a skiff was now constructed; being bound together with iron clasps, duly provided with oars and rudder, and precisely disposed to the object of being borne upon the waters and of cutting its way through them.

This skiff, as placed upon the surface of the waters and as advancing through them, is like the singer's melody; which is borne upon the resonant orchestral waves. Although something altogether different from the mirror presented by the water surface it was built and arranged solely with reference to it, and with precise regard to its properties; so that on land the skiff would be altogether useless. It is only when upon the waters that it seems filled with happy life. Then—though carried—it has its own motion; though moved—it is always at rest; and our eye, in its rapid glance across the lake, is always attracted to it as representing the human object of existence of those

waving waters; which, previously, had seemed destined to no purpose.

For all that, the skiff does not float upon the surface of the water mirror; nor can the lake sustain it in any safe direction, unless it first sinks that entire side of its body which touches the water surface. It is therefore not like a thin board resting upon the surface of the waters, which is thrown by them hither and thither; for, with every forward motion of the skiff, the oars cut deep into the water; and, upraised again, they let the clinging moisture fall like small melodic drops.

The contrast between the hold upon the water surface presented by the floating plank and skiff respectively is particularly instructive; and, when once realised by the student, will cause him to distinguish "thin-board" from "skiff" melodies ever after. But the same trait is presented, in various measure, by every one of the allusions; besides which it is to be remembered that, although these analogies are used only for incidental purposes, Wagner remains faithful to their terms whenever the same subjects recur; and indeed that fidelity in this respect entirely appertains to his literary character. Thus in "Oper und Drama" the comparison of music with a woman is maintained throughout, and may be said to form the key-stone of the entire work. At other times, however, the fidelity in question appears in connection with new features; or even as confined to a certain harmony of idea, and in association with a novel set of terms. It will be well

in the student's interest to give an example of each of these cases.

An instance of the first occurs when Wagner tells us that melody, as it appears upon the upper surface of harmony, is subject only to the harmonic groundwork, the latter being viewed as rising from its root; so that the aspect assumed by melody is that of a horizontal series, attached to the harmonic ground by *perpendicular chain.*

The "perpendicular chain" is here the new feature alluded to; whilst a resort to "novelty in terms" occurs when Wagner claims an analogy between musical elements and constituents of the human body.

In this he likens harmony and rhythm to the formative organs, though melody is the first manifestation by which the form of music is revealed. In allegorical terms, therefore, harmony and rhythm are the blood, the flesh, the nerves and the bones; and they therefore remain similarly hidden from the eye, as the latter glances at the man; erect and full of life. Melody, on the other hand, is the man himself; complete and as he stands before us. At the aspect of this man our attention is directed to the slender form, and is absorbed by the face as the most expressive part of the formal exterior; being finally arrested by the eye. This organ, in its turn, acquires its power of communication by capacity for taking up utterances of the surrounding world. Thus, melody expresses music's inner being; without any revelation of the inner organism.

Full of interest as this analogy undoubtedly is, even that quality must yield to an instructiveness of the most precious value to all whose present equipment enables them to turn it to account.

Such then being a few of the analogies relating to theoretical subjects we shall next turn to the illustration of those by which Wagner sought to explain his operatic views.

II.

OPERATIC SUBJECTS.

(A) ANALOGIES RELATING TO THE ARIA AND FOLK-TUNE.

WAGNER reminds us in the "Judaism" pamphlet that to whatever height of fancy our art-luxury may aspire it can never lose connection with the Folk-spirit, and that the poet invariably draws his impetus from loving contemplation of the instinctive life of the community within which he dwells. Yet, if we now begin with Folk-melody it is not merely on account of its connection with all musical art which Wagner thus alludes to but also because the necessity of treating it as the forefront of the operatic subject was specially forced upon Wagner by circumstances which had preceded him. From whatever cause the Aria may have derived its prevalence in the conventional opera of the period, the fact remains that it was the folk-tune in disguise—moreover, it remains notwithstanding our option of regarding the disguise in question either as a disfigurement or an elaboration according to point of view.

It is scarcely necessary to inform the reader that Wagner regarded this disguise as a disfigurement; but, by way of adopting a fixed point of departure for these observations, it may be well to quote his exact description. He considered the Aria to be "the folk-tune stripped of its natural truth and simplicity and given a capricious textual setting, merely in order to impart to it a show of dramatic coherence." The inherent difference, as he conceived it, between folk-song and aria was that the former originated in the immediate union of poetry and music; the folk-tune not being an art-production in the sense now understood, but a spontaneous manifestation of the folk-spirit through art-means; whereas the fundamental character of the aria, as an art-form, was one of absolute music.

We choose this point for taking up the thread of his teaching because of the interest of the analogy he employs. This begins at the passage in which he accuses the luxurious classes who revel (though at present it would probably be more correct to say "used to revel") in the operatic aria, of not understanding the primitive air from which their favourite form had been derived. The reason of this he considers to have been that they accepted it merely as a *tune*; quite failing to perceive that the melody had originally been the natural outcome of the speech behind it, and therefore had had no separate existence. So simple a conception scarcely required support; but, yielding to his

love of analogy, Wagner brings it home to our minds in a most picturesque manner.

He describes the "man of luxury" as having heard the folk-tune only from a distance; and as having merely listened from his grand mansion to the song of the reapers as they passed along. All that penetrated to his sumptuous chamber was therefore the mere tone-succession; as to the word-succession, it altogether failed to reach his ear. If we compare the tune to the delightful scent of a flower, then the words were as the body of the flower itself, with all its tender stamens. But the man of luxury was content to enjoy the flower in the one sense of allowing it to give pleasure to his olfactory nerves; neglecting altogether to associate it with any corresponding pleasure to the eye. So he extracted the scent and distilled the perfume into bottles; by which means he was enabled either to carry it about with him, or to sprinkle his household surroundings with it at his pleasure. Why was he restricted to these means of enjoyment? Because, in order to appreciate the very aspect of the flower, it would have been necessary for him to draw nearer. He would then have had to descend from his palace; to pass into the green fields; even to force his way through briars, leaves and branches; and for all of these duties the superior man had no inclination. So he had to be content with the artificial product, which is none other than the operatic "aria"; though, force it into whatever combinations he might, it was ever bound

to remain untruthful, because of being a mere musical extract.

How the folk-tune was used and misused as basis of the operatic aria; how Gluck revolted at the singer's domination; and how Mozart, by force of genius, reconciled the world to conventional forms; are all facts impressively passed in review, but it is not until we arrive at Rossini that the same analogy is pursued; when we find that composer described as "the man who had taken this flower-extract in hand and given it back a body." To Rossini it is further attributed that he imparted to the body of the flower, artificial as it was, the appearance of being fresh; that he became the skilful concocter of artificial flowers made from silk and satin and touched up with deceptive tints; and that he sprinkled their chalices with the aforesaid extract, until they seemed to give forth fragrance like the natural growth.

At first sight this analogy may not appear to be quite so striking; but by the aid of Wagner's description of how Rossini formed his melodies it acquires additional clearness. He is said to have preferred to listen to people who sang without notes; and it was what he heard in that way; or what had spontaneously remained within recall of the people out of the entire opera "set-out"; in other words, simple ear-pleasing *melodic melody*, which he decided was the kind to be adopted: the kind of melody which, as Wagner describes it, "we catch, we know not why; which we

hum, we know why; which to-day we exchange for that of yesterday, and to-morrow shall change again, we also know not why. Melody which sounds mournful when we are gay, and gay when we are put out; and which we continue to 'tra la'—though we have not the faintest knowledge of any reason why."

What Wagner most intended to imply by all this was the essentially "absolute" character of the Rossini melody as well as the incentive it offered to other composers to *go and do likewise.* The two things are practically one; for, considering the success of the Rossini melody, and accepting the term "absolute" as signifying detached from text-obligations, the method of gathering tune in this way converted the whole world into a hunting-ground for melody *ready made.* Such melody, moreover, being frankly valued exclusively for its mere note-succession, was not hampered by considerations of suitability for any very special connection; and, being distributed far and wide in the mouths of the people, offered naturally the best prizes to whatever composer might prove himself to be the most alert.

The mental spectacle of such a process naturally started Wagner's imagination; and, under the figure of a "hunt," he allots to this new impetus one of his most amusing descriptions. With his usual love of method he classifies the "hunters" into those who engage in a comparatively indolent local search, and those who take Baedeker in hand, and start hunting

with the iron steed. Rossini, in his view, had no need to enlist among the latter class; for the reason that he belonged to a land where the flow of melody was most abundant. And yet there came a time when, fired by what he saw going on round about him, even Rossini himself felt constrained to take a glance at a wider field; and his awakening in this sense is Wagner's opportunity for one of his most interesting analogies.

Rossini, he tells us, had used up the "musical fat" of the lovely but much-soiled land of Italy, and was comfortably looking on with a smile of surprise at the cribbing going on by the gallant huntsmen after folk-melodies. One specially good rider was now seen riding madly through all the fish and vegetable stock of Naples market; dispersing everything round about him. Away to Portici he hurried on, away to the simple fishermen who sing there; those fishermen who catch fish—and then sleep and afterwards quarrel; those fishermen who play with their wives and children—and then throw knives and kill one another; but who, whatever they do, *sing all the time.* "Ah! Master Auber," says Wagner, "confess; *that* was a good ride."

This was the spectacle which Rossini viewed with such surprise; and the effect produced upon him was that, whilst journeying to Paris, he took it into his head to make a slight sojourn in the Swiss Alps; just to listen to the way in which the sturdy fellows there,

with their mountains and cows, amuse themselves musically. Having duly arrived in Paris, he made his "extra gracious compliment" to Auber *(he knew very well why)* and, with much paternal joy, presented to the world his new-born babe of—"William Tell."

The rivalry thus indicated is, however, of little present interest; for, considering that the employment of folk-melody by both composers was of the same kind, they are united now; whatever they may have been at the time to which the above relates. Another aspect of the same subject is presented by Weber; in turning to whom Wagner resumes has analogy of the "folk-flower of the meadows"; saying that Weber's impulse was to prove that the sensuous melodies of Rossini did not proceed from that true melodic fount at all; but that it was only the fragrance of the flower which had reached the magnificent chambers of the luxurious music-world; and, even then, only to be distilled into portable scents. Accordingly, Weber longed for a sight of the flower itself; and it was the ardency of this desire which drove him out of the stately saloon, and away to the green fields.

Wagner's sympathy with Weber is easily accounted for and frequently in evidence in course of his writings, but never more beautifully exemplified than in his description of this subject. He pictures Weber as finding the folk-flower at the spring of the cheerily running brook, between powerfully scented grasses or

wonderfully clustered moss, and amongst the rustling branches of old forest trees. How the heart-beat of the artist quickened at the sight, and at the inspiration of the fullness of such fragrance! His love could not resist the impetus thus given to it to bring this life-giving fragrance—this health-giving vision—to his nerveless fellow-man; and he was therefore impelled to pluck the flower itself from the wild which gave it godlike nurture, in order to hold it up as the all-saving means for a sensual world in need of blessing.

Weber was perhaps not altogether free from participation in the same "hunt" as that in which Rossini and Auber engaged; and even Wagner admits as much by remarking that Weber had assiduously explored Forkel's descriptions of Arabian music and taken therefrom a march for watchers of the harem. This, however, is insufficient to affect the general case. The contrast between Weber's treatment of such melody and that of Auber and Rossini, the difference in aspiration presented, and the melancholy outcome in Weber's case, notwithstanding his nobility of purpose and manliness of effort all tend to support Wagner's main contention that Weber was the composer who suffered most from that "inner contradiction" of operatic methods to which we shall have more copiously to refer when dealing with absolute music.

(B) ANALOGIES RELATING TO WEBER, MOZART AND THE SHAKESPEARE DRAMA.

We now resume the description of Weber's treatment of folk-melody given by Wagner under the symbol of a *flower*, the fragrance alone of which had contented Rossini but of which Weber yearned for complete possession, at the point where Wagner is contemplating the result.

"Unhappy man!" he exclaims—"he plucked the flower; then high in the halls of splendour placing the sweetly modest bloom—there in a precious vase. Daily he moistened it with fresh water from the fountain in the wood. Yet see! The leaves, so chastely closed before, now open wide to the sniffing nose of every libertine."

"What ails thee, flower?" exclaims the master, with soul-felt agony. "Dost thou forget the beautiful green fields, the scene of all thy early innocence?"

And now the flowers all begin to cast their leaves. Weary and withered they scatter; one last breath of their sweet fragrance whispering:

"I die because thou pluckedst me!"

And with the flower the master also died: for the flower had been his art, and his art his mysterious hold on life. No more did flowers grow upon the wood-meadow. Tyrolese singers might come from their Alps, in order that lords and ladies might amuse themselves with the merry jodling of these youngsters about the "Dierndel" of their love. But the flower bloomed no more.

The dried-up source could no longer be made to flow; and, where musical artists searching for natural expression tried to discern the ripple of the brook, the prosaic clip-clip of the mill prevented them.

Wagner was peculiarly steadfast in the use of any analogy upon which he had once alighted, and accordingly, when the great "hunt" after folk-melody had taken place as already described, introducing a *national* element to melody generally and therefore to the opera, we find him returning to the present symbolism with only a slight modification to suit the circumstance. His view of the situation then reached was that the folk-element had always been Art's fructifying source whenever allowed to raise itself by a natural growth; so that in art-matters we have really taken our nourishment from the people without knowing it. Detached from the latter, we thought that the fruit upon which we lived was manna falling by divine ordination into our very mouths. The manna being all consumed, we cast a greedy glance around at the fruit-trees growing upon the earth. This is the point from which by allowing "fruit-trees" to substitute the former "flower" we find Wagner to have resumed his previous current of thought.

Then, he tells us, as "robbers by the grace of God," we stripped the trees of their fruits, with an all-thievish effrontery; not troubling whether we had either planted or tended them. We even pulled up the trees themselves to their very roots; in order to find out whether, by skilful preparation these might not be rendered palatable; and, having so treated the people's entire forest, we now stand in the position of beggars —unclothed and famishing.

Such is the picture which Wagner draws of the condition of Opera-music at the time he wrote. It had pounced upon Folk-song, which it had sucked dry to the very roots; then throwing back to the plundered people the fibrous remnant of the fruit—in the shape of repulsive opera-melody—as a miserable and unwholesome nourishment. And he holds that to be similar to the case of the man of luxury, who could not understand folk-melody because he merely heard the song of the reapers as they passed along, instead of going to the green fields for better knowledge, as well as like that of the opera-composer who could never catch the real folk-element because in order to do that he would have had to identify himself with the people. The composer might seize upon the peculiarity of any folk-element, however, and call it "national." And then, just as in the matter of fashion in clothing, in which any foreign trait relating to neglected items of popular costume is applied at will to outlandish trimmings; so, in the opera, single features of melody and rhythm, detached from the main-life current of secluded nationalities, were planted upon the decked-out carcases of superannuated and empty forms.

It will thus be seen that Folk-melody, though not inherently appertaining to the opera, contributes much material for Wagner's grand dissertation upon the opera-problem; and the same may be said of the Shakespeare drama—another subject which at first sight, would appear to be fairly remote from the opera

problem. But in reality it is strange that more comment has not been provoked by Wagner's analogical "open door" of the Shakespeare play, as well as by his general view of the works of the great dramatist; if only because of the opposition between Wagner conceptions and those now fashionable of Shakespearean *mise en scène*. Shakespeare condensed the superabundant incident of the mediævals, thereby dispensing with a vast amount of verbal description; whilst, with him, every character, down to the most subordinate, was thoroughly individualised. He depended upon the spectator's *fantasy* for the realisation of the surrounding; and Wagner regards as an interference with the purity of the Shakespearean drama all that elaborate stage realism with which we have grown familiar. It is all very well for enthusiasts to picture to themselves that Shakespeare would be entranced could he but witness the gorgeousness with which his plays are now prepared. But that was not Wagner's opinion, as we shall now see by his account of the "open door."

He reminds us that there was one thing which the Shakespeare stage left open to imagination, and that was the representation of the scene itself; carpets being hung around and a tablet upon which the inscription could be easily changed informing the spectator of what he was required to picture in his mind—whether a

Palace, Wood, Street or Field.

The effect was to cause the *door to remain open* for Romance, with its over-variety of material; and to History, with its superabundance of action. By Shakespeare, History and Romance were, for the first time, represented with drastic individuality. But the lack of scenic representation was the *open door* by means of which loosely constructed drama was allowed to go in and out as it pleased; thus producing a confusion in dramatic art which endured for two centuries—and, in fact, continues to the present day.

The effect of this analogy runs practically through the whole of Wagner's great dissertation; and is what enables him, for example, to account for the struggles (and. as he considers, the failures) of Schiller and Goethe, whose dramas were partly literary and partly scenic; in the sense that they appealed alternately to Feeling and Intellect, with the result of disturbing both by the lack of unity. It also enables him in the long run to trace the ultimate subservience of the poet to the musician; though the detail of this process would involve so much digression that we shall have necessarily to restrict ourselves to a reference to the single case of Mozart. This was the composer whom Wagner considered to present the most happy instance of co-operation between the poet and musician; not, however, on account of any special suitability of the texts with which Mozart was provided, but purely on account of his correct view of musical art—that of frank acceptance of the poetic aim, whatever it might

be, as the ideal to be realised. As we shall elsewhere have to deal with Wagner's admissions respecting Mozart as an absolute musician we have only for the moment to deal with the praise accorded to him for having prolonged the life of Italian Opera by covering up its defects—praise which we naturally expect to find conveyed to us through the usual medium of analogy.

Mozart's nature we are told was like the untroubled spotless clearness of a bright water-surface, to which the choicest bloom of Italian music bowed its head just as before a mirror; gazing upon, recognising and loving its own image. This mirror was, however, only the upper surface of a deep and endless sea of aspirations and longings; which presented this surface, as it were, in indication of its contents; seeming to wish to gather shapeliness and beauty from the feeble greeting of a beautiful manifestation bowing to it as if thirsting for knowledge of its own being.

The somewhat "transcendental" nature of this comparison only renders it the better example of Wagner's tendency to the use of analogical methods being such that he was never long able to refrain from them. So he passes on to describe Mozart's weakness to us as consisting of the docility with which he accepted the prevailing opera-forms, such as aria and recitative; notwithstanding which however the stream of his music was so copious that nothing could restrain it. "Flowing beyond its chosen bounds it sought ever freer and broader scope, until we meet it again, swollen into

the mighty sea of the Beethoven symphony." And thus it was that whilst, in pure instrumental music, these capabilities developed immeasurable power; the opera-forms stood like burnt-out brick-work, naked and shivering* within their old shapes—and waiting for some guest to strike a temporary home within them.

Those who know their Wagner sufficiently will probably, at this point, be seized with a semi-consciousness that he is steering somehow for his pet aversion—Meyerbeer. The evidence of that, however, is as yet admittedly insufficient; and we have first to hear something of the capricious and extraordinary features of Berlioz's instrumentation—need it be said, analogically? What that marvellous man had to say to the people, we are told, was so unusual that it could not be given in plain and simple words. It was like the kind of supernatural wonder with which, in former times, the priesthood used to impose upon childish men; so as to make them believe that some god was appearing to them. Nothing but mechanics worked these wonders; so, nowadays, the supernatural, because of its being *un*-natural, requires the aid of mechanics in order to be paraded before an unenlightened public; and the Berlioz orchestra is just a wonder of this kind.

We have already been told that it was Mozart's to "stoop to conquer," and not to "erect tinsel-towers upon a hollow and unworthy basis." Now it is the turn of

* Gleich ausgebranntem Mauerwerk nackt und frostig in ihrer alten Gestalt stehen.

Berlioz to apply his wonderful mechanics—though only to absolute instrumental music. By and by, we shall have both *tinsel-towers* and *mechanics* together; one being represented as a result of the other, and both being placed to the charge of poor Meyerbeer under the label of "effects without cause." But, as the novelist is wont to say: "We are anticipating." Let us, by all means, keep this exhilarating Meyerbeerian episode in reserve for a special instalment of our subject.

(C) ANALOGIES RELATING TO MEYERBEER, ROSSINI AND OPERA IN GENERAL.

Wagner's criticism of Meyerbeer was perhaps not entirely due to that composer's defects; though it would be totally unjust to say—as was usual in the past generation—that "Meyerbeer's success had all to do with it." But it is not because we know better now that we should altogether disregard this idea; for, after all, though it was not his rival's success, *as such*, which excited Wagner's hostility, it may be said, to some extent, to have been the hindrance presented by that success to the spread of his own views which at all events partly did so. But when we reflect how brave a man it took to fight the Wagner fight it is impossible to regard each stray thrust of such an encounter as if it related to no higher object than a passing irritation.

Returning then to our "tinsel-towers and mechanics" as resulting in "effects without cause" we shall now have to become more closely acquainted with this general idea by taking Wagner's description of the appeal made by instrumental music of the "programme" order. This appeal he tells us was to the listener's *imagination*; a means of interpretation outside the region of music being provided for the purpose. In the Opera, on the other hand, all was destined to be brought forward in a state of natural reality. By bringing both of these means together—that is to say, the presence of the natural objects and the effort of imagination respecting them—the composer now produced his "effects" which were therefore the result of scenic mechanical resources; and such effects, being obliged under these conditions to be accepted as detached from their objects, were truly described as "effects without cause."

All this is traced by him to the subserviency into which the operatic librettist had fallen, and the corresponding ascendancy of the composer; a subject upon which Wagner dwells most circumstantially in several cases, but never perhaps so amusingly as when describing the peculiar relations which existed between Meyerbeer and Scribe. The following analogy will show the "Grand-Opera" of Meyerbeer and Scribe to have excited within him such a special wrath that no pains were to be spared in holding it up to general censure:

A hero-champion for light and freedom has, burning within his breast, a mighty love for his down-trodden brethren; and the desire is to portray this hero at the climax of his career. Crowds of people have followed his inspired call, forsaking house and home, and wife and child, in order, in their struggle against mighty oppressors, either to conquer or to die. Trials already endured have caused demoralisation in his army, but all will be lost unless the citadel before which they have arrived is stormed that very day.

In nightly solitude the hero has sought counsel, and he rises, consecrated to his task, stepping out among his hosts at the first streak of the morning's dawn. His eloquence goes right home to their inmost marrow, and he now presses forward to the realisation of his inspiration by actual deed. He grasps the standard and swings it high in the direction of the forbidding ramparts.

"Up then!" he cries, "this city must and shall be ours."

This is the right moment, Wagner tells us, for the stage to become our *world*; when the morning cloud should cleave asunder, and the rising sun illumine that citadel—thus consecrated to the victory of the advancing and inspired host. But these marvels spring from the inspiration of the dramatic *poet*; and are, accordingly, not desired by this kind of opera-composer; who is ready enough to accept the "effect," but prefers to dispense with the "cause"; and all because it does not happen to depend upon his own individual power.

Therefore, he goes on to say that, in the scene of Meyerbeer's "Prophète" resembling the above, all that we have for the ear is a hymn-like melody borrowed from folk-song; and, for the eye, nothing but a master-

piece of mechanism. The very object which ought to be warmed by that melody, and upon whom the illumining beams of that sun have any reason to fall, is—is—well, *is simply not there*!

This is what Wagner calls in his metaphorical style, a "frantic driving of the opera-coach"; that *coach* in which, even previously to the introduction of "Grand Opera," things had already been bad enough. Even then, the poet was holding the reins of the horses attached to it so loosely that everyone could see they were about to fall from his hands. It may be true that, in "Masaniello" and "William Tell," the poet still continued to hold the reins; but why? Simply because both Auber and Rossini preferred to sit comfortably in the coach, without caring where the coachman might happen to drive. But Meyerbeer's preference was to take the reins from the coachman's hands, and try to create wonderment by the zig-zag of his course.

The analogy of the "coach" is good. But it would be even better for a little qualification of that "zig-zag." As it was, however, Wagner could not assign to Meyerbeer an honourable place, even among the "hunters" after folk-melody; unless we may so interpret his giving him credit for a cosmopolitanism which caused him not to care where such melody came from. This may, however, be a credit or discredit, according to the reader's way of thnking; just as it is sometimes difficult to make out whether Wagner is praising

Meyerbeer for a proficiency in languages, or blaming him for being indifferent to the spirit of every one of them. At any rate, the picture of the "huntsmen" rushing, Baedeker in hand, to various parts of Europe in search of folk-melody justifies us in regarding a linguist as just the man for these local investigations and even in hoping that Wagner might take the same view. But no; for we are told that, even in the "melody-hunt," he always *followed*—never, by any chance, coming up with the development. We are here irresistibly driven to picture poor Meyerbeer as one of that mock-heroic regiment whose exploits are commemorated in the student-song:

"Immer langsam voran!
Dass der Krœwinkler Landsturm nachkommen kann";

but Wagner, on the contrary, compares him to the *starling* who follows the plough-share in the field, and picks up the earth-worm as it lies exposed in the furrow.

There was one "effect" produced by Meyerbeer however which really seems to have courted Wagner's approval, and that was the check he gave to the popularity of Rossini, who, we are told, now became the "*dissoluto punito*," or if you will the discarded mistress; evincing his disgust at the change which had taken place by telling the Paris Opera-director who once requested him to fill up a gap that he would not come back until—"the Jews had finished their Sab-

bath." And, in general, although Rossini comes in for a secondary share of blame as compared with Meyerbeer, he cannot reasonably be said to have been at all stinted. A very good example of this is presented to us by the analogy chosen in order to depict the decline of Rossini's popularity. Opera had then, we are told, a being after the manner of the Byzantine Empire; and, as this lasted, so had such opera also to last, as long as the unnatural conditions remained in evidence enabling it, though inwardly dead, to cling to life.

And he emphasises the disgust which these unnatural conditions (as relating of course principally to the artificial subservience of the poet) are bound to cause, by saying that "this will go on until finally the savage Turks appear—those Turks who once, as we know, put an end to the Byzantine Empire; and went so far in their coarseness as to use the magnificent and holy church of St. Sophia as a stable for wild horses."

In all this no reference has been made to the natural positions which in Opera the poet and musician should relatively occupy, but Wagner is drawn to the representation of these by analogy through an allusion to French opera, in which he is dealing with the diverting ideas expressed by the couplet. In French Opera, he tells us, the poet had previously only allotted a certain field to the composer which the latter was free to cultivate for himself; formal possession of the *site*, however, continuing to remain with the poet. If, in course

of time, the musical domain had so increased, in accordance with the nature of things, as now to cover the entire ground, that did not prevent the *title* from continuing a possession of the poet; so that the musician could not in strictness be considered more than a mere holder. Thus, though he might regard his holding as hereditary property, he nevertheless—as in the Romo-Germanic Empire of yore—paid homage to the Emperor, as lord of the land he held.

These natural conditions he maintains have already occurred to many who nevertheless have lacked the courage to state and uphold them in the face of conventions which had become powerfully established. It is in this spirit that he complains of the critic who, having practically discovered the source of operatic weakness, instead of facing the result of his own findings, preferred to take refuge in mere regrets that Mendelssohn's early death should have prevented the solution of the riddle. And hereupon we have the following:

> What this critic wants, says Wagner, is the "grand unified operatic edifice." But of whom does he ask this? He abandons all the net outcome of his review in order to ask it—*of the musician*! It is as if he wanted a house built, and applied to the sculptor or upholsterer. It does not even so much as occur to him to think of the *architect*; the very man who not only provides the joint work of the sculptor and upholsterer, but that of every kind of necessary helper for the entire preparation of the house, with its special object and disposition.

And so we might go on, as it would seem intermin-

ably, without exhausting the Wagner analogies; which have not only a solid and valuable interest in their bearing upon the main subject, but also a lighter and fugitive interest more to be ranged under the head of entertainment. The merely fugitive interest of Wagner's writings, as compared with their deeply intellectual and warmly emotional content reminds us however of another beautiful analogy of his; that in which he instructs us how an emotional sensation is often dependent upon invisible conditions. Thus, though the possibility is unlikely to strike an onlooker, the sensation is quickly subservient to artistic treatment; and Wagner's own remark may here be well applied to his literary work in the sense that "it is like a well-tuned harp, the strings of which may be lightly set in motion by a passing current of air, but which wait for the player's extraction from them of clear sounding chords." The lighter interest may seem but a small matter to the careless reader and yet be found rich in suggestion by those who ponder deeply.

III.

WAGNER AND ABSOLUTE MUSIC.

(A) HIS VIEWS CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO A HIGHER MUSICAL PROBLEM.

THERE is a growing disposition among absolute musicians to allow their affection for their art to cause them to set up claims in its behalf which repose somewhat more upon faith than upon ascertained fact. This is due no doubt to the feeling that beyond the great opera-problem which Wagner undertook to solve there may still lie a far greater musical problem: the problem, that is, of settling to what extent of determinative expression absolute music is destined finally to attain; though, in respect of that problem it would be almost too much to say that we are as yet agreed even as to the conditions upon which its solution must depend, and still less as to questions the very answers to which form only the preliminaries of the greater inquiry.

Why tonal should be condemned to less precision than articulate sound, notwithstanding the former's

superior expressiveness; why that defining attribute which Wagner calls the "clothing consonant" should have never found its equivalent in tonal art; why tonal intervals of imperative, interrogative, plaintive or other expression should have never proceeded beyond suggestion; and why the affinity with articulative methods presented by the infinity of rhythmic collocations should remain dead to purposes of accurate definition: all these are questions to be answered before we can even begin to explore the possibilities of tonal sound as a means of more meaningful expression.

The great advance of absolute music has rendered us so satisfied with results attained that enterprise in this field has been discouraged; and at present, with the exception of a philosophic musician here and there, we no more picture a "greater musical problem" than did the ancients picture the scientific triumphs of to-day. But the complacency of one generation has never been a criterion of what another might accomplish; wonders of one period so often becoming the commonplaces of another, that all that anyone joining in the scornfulness with which first propositions are received may be sure of is—that he, at all events, does not belong to the class by whom history is made. What we have to settle in the first place is whether the limitations ascribed by Wagner to absolute music are well-founded—not whether Wagner was right in his conclusions respecting Opera; for it is quite possible to agree with him in all his expressed views concerning

the application of absolute music to the latter; and still believe in the existence of a greater musical problem; as we shall see.

Extreme views often go beyond the intention of their author; and, when Wagner deals with the limitations and misapplications of absolute music in Opera he so completely attains his object that a large portion of his dissertation goes beyond actual necessity, and in so doing engenders a new set of ideas. It is he himself who has, so to speak, put us "upon the scent" of a greater musical problem; by the very severity with which he dilates upon the subject of absolute music, as detached from Opera altogether. When, for instance, he tells us that absolute musicians do not know what they are talking about, and that they would be put to utter confusion if asked to produce a sample of music which had not been borrowed from either gesture or articulate verse, we immediately think of Palestrina who borrowed nothing from gesture; and the sublimity of whose style was due to its detachment from sensuous expression. Wagner uses the term "gesture" as symbolising dance-forms; though the latter belong rather to the "metrical convention" period, previous to which a music had existed from which dependence upon mechanical measurements may be said to have been practically absent. The primitive state of instrumental music in Palestrina's time sufficiently accounts for this freedom from slavish rhythm; for instruments of mechanical origin

naturally tend to the fostering also of a mechanical structure of the music they perform.

It follows therefore that march and dance may be admitted to form the foundation of modern instrumental music without this in any sense affecting the broader question of absolute music; for there is nothing surprising, after generations of habit, in the fact that people should regard metre as instinctive; any more than it is surprising that a man regards the use of his mother-tongue as instinctive—notwithstanding that his common sense will tell him that it is no more instinctive than any other. Besides; were metre instinctively inseparable from music, it would have been equally so felt in Palestrina's day; and, even if we assume the possibility of a gradual change since then, it is the *earlier* impulse which we should have to regard as instinctive, and not the later habit.

The fact would appear to be that Wagner's devoted concentration upon solution of the Opera problem so completely explains his slight attention to other matters that, considering the benefit accruing to the world therefrom it would appear to be as absurd as ungrateful to dwell upon the point. But the fact remains that, after Palestrina, an interruption in musical development of nearly a century took place; and that when progress was resumed it took an entirely new direction. Yet, in the "Judaism" pamphlet, Wagner talks of the "urgency of following up with intelligence *through Bach to Palestrina* the root from

which musical art had been enabled to spring to its present height and meaning." We can understand this vagueness not affecting his own inquiry; but it vitally affects a settlement of the range of absolute music; for it is everything to know what might have happened had the journey upon a new road never been started; had all the genius of Beethoven and of the entire galaxy of modern masters been devoted to the cultivation of the "prose" of music; and, finally, had all the skill, insight and energy of Wagner himself been enlisted in the same campaign.

It behoves us therefore first to ascertain whether Wagner's limitations of absolute music are final; and, in judging of this, we shall first have to remember that his principal theme in connection with it is its misapplication. Surely this is not a feature likely to inspire confidence in the conclusions reached; *use* being not generally determined by *abuse*, or the power of any healthy organism estimated by that of a degenerate sample of the species. The sternly rhythmical strains of an operatic aria, for example, might serve well enough for ear-pleasure or for the illustration of gesture; and their merely ill-judged association with dramatic text can have really nothing to do with the general subject of absolute music; so that our agreement with Wagner as to consequences of abuse leaves the question of legitimate use and development, exactly where it was.

He tells us many things about the Aria. That only

one form of the interpreter's capability was represented by it—that of Absolute Song. That, moreover, this displacement of the singer's vocation was the cause of an unnatural relation between other elements, the worst exemplification of which was the ascendancy thereby gained by the composer over the poet. That, just as long as arias are composed will the fundamental character of that form be obliged to present itself as one of absolute music. That the aria was the only tone-piece in opera possessed of any coherent form. That this coherence was not derived from dramatic necessity, but simply brought about by the measurements of absolute music. And finally that this form (which was merely upheld by custom and foisted upon the poet) merely consisted of a theme composed beforehand, and then alternated with a second theme; the repetitions being effected by arbitrary will, in conjunction with musical motive.

All this is true. But is it not thus Wagner himself who opens our eyes to the existence of a "greater musical problem"? His precision and earnestness are such that we not only follow him, but receive from him an impetus which carries us farther than he intended. The very strength of his *negative* conclusion as to absolute music in opera points to the importance of a subject upon which so much fervour was expended; and even the very terms which he employs are as sign-posts indicating the road to other destinations. It is thus that we agree to the *womanly* vocation of musical

expression in opera only to claim for it a masculine vocation elsewhere. It is thus that we agree that *music cannot think;* for whatever may be the degree of determinative expression at which it may ultimately arrive it is quite certain that it will never be able to convey thought simultaneously with the delivery of articulate speech. Surely it is the conception of a "greater musical problem" which best enables us to join Wagner in his ridicule of musical "thought"; because of our having become thereby so fully warned that nothing more than the suggestion of thought has yet been attempted that denial of all possibilities in that direction can cause no surprise.

Conceptions of this kind are therefore highly conducive to the feeling with which it is most advisable to approach Wagner's contemptuous references to absolute music, which run to the effect that whenever musical themes were bluntly called "thoughts" it happened either that this was a *thoughtless* application of the word, or else that it revealed a self-deception on the part of the musician, who merely called a theme a "thought" because in course of it he had necessarily thought *something or other.* But nobody knew what that "something" was; or, at all events, if anybody did know, it was only because the composer had told him in so many words; in the attempt to induce him to adopt the same *thought*, and imagine that he *thought* it every time he heard the theme.

All this is not any too severe, for the reason that it

is strictly true. But, precisely because it is so true, it proves that absolute music, notwithstanding an admitted present incapability, possesses an instinctive aspiration in the direction of thought. In other words, though it cannot, it would *like* to think. What is the secret then of that instinctive longing? Time alone can tell; but, so far as present means of enlightenment exist, we find them best in the writings of Wagner himself. No one has ever emphasised the conflict between poet and musician as Wagner has, and therefore no one has so aroused our attention to the natural strivings of music to become an independent language. Does he not tell us that the wide extension of, and dwelling upon, a motive were *necessary* to the musician's intelligible expression within his form? And that it had become the poet's business to restrict himself to a rigidly fixed description of dramatic project so as to allow room for the capacious ease *necessary* to the musician in his "experiments"?

It is obviously impossible to deny all masculine vocation to an element so capable of browbeating the poet as Wagner represents absolute music to have done; an element moreover to which he grants, as we have seen, the necessity of intelligible expression within its own form. The "inner contradiction" of operatic art which he describes amounted to the musician's attempt—not only to speak at the same time as the poet, but to make the latter agree with him. The question was one of the usurpation of ascendancy by

music in the opera, and not one of absolute music in the abstract; so that the mere fact of an independent tonal expression having thus aspired to monopolise attention—the mere possibility of the conflict which it was Wagner's great purpose to end—is a strong presumption in favour of an intelligibility ultimately to be attained by tonal expression greater than anything which the present means at our command enable us to reach.

(B) HIS VIEWS CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO A HIGHER MUSICAL PROBLEM.

The "inner contradiction" of operatic art, which is the term employed by Wagner for the conflict between musician and poet, was strikingly evident in the case of Weber's "Euryanthe." Wagner's opinion of this opera was that, during opera's whole existence, "no such work has been composed"; by which expression he meant that no work had arisen in which, notwithstanding the composer's noble ambition to attain to what was best, the "inner contradiction" in question had been so logically carried out, or so openly presented. He expressly defines this "contradiction" as one between absolute self-sufficing melody and truth of dramatic expression.

We start therefore with a clear idea of the conflict itself; which, as we have seen, reveals by its very exist-

ence the masculine character of absolute music. But it so happens that, when we come to examine the manner in which Wagner describes the conflict as having begun, we find further proof of the same thing. He tells us, for example, that the music of the lyric element in "Euryanthe" was composed beforehand; whilst, of the remainder of the libretto, a large portion was foreign to absolute music altogether. With regard to the first point it is clear that Weber at all events considered musical expression to be supreme; whilst as to portions of the libretto being foreign to absolute music, our agreement does not involve our limiting the legitimate capacities of the latter. We have to be very cautious before subscribing to what Wagner has to say upon this point; for we cannot avoid being haunted by recollections of what he has elsewhere said respecting the incapacities of articulate speech; as well as by the reflection that, of all men, he was the last to fall short of an argument. At all events, since absolute music and articulate speech are both defective means of communication, it is reasonable to expect to become enlightened as to the former by studying the latter's case. Let us see therefore what Wagner has to say upon that subject, separately.

He limits the power of speech at the present day to that of communicating our feelings *to the understanding only;* saying that modern language lacks the capacity for that implicit confidence which is implied by direct communication of our feelings to the feelings of

those whom we address. He adds that, for that reason, it was quite consistent when, in our modern development, Feeling sought refuge from an absolute speech of this intellectual kind; and it naturally sought it in that absolute tonal language which constitutes our music of the present day.

Not only the terms "absolute" and "intellectual" as applied here in common to tonal and articulate lead us to brace the two modes of expression in our minds, but, here again, it is Wagner himself who puts us upon the scent of a "greater musical problem." For, if Feeling instinctively sought refuge in the tonal language from defects of the articulate, that not only goes far to prove an instinctive consciousness of need, but also of the direction from which relief must come. We are bound to couple our gratitude for Wagner's great deeds with regret, therefore, at his want of sympathy with the natural aspirations of absolute music; and especially as those aspirations were in no sense antagonistic to his own ambitions. In spite of the absence of any *real* antagonism, however, he persisted in taking the view that all the developments of absolute music whereby it had attained to importance were simply due to the want of scope afforded to pure musical expression in Opera. Yet, considering that he uses the term *music* to signify the exercise only of its "womanly" vocation, it becomes quite embarrassing to see how the one subject could possibly obstruct the other; and there can certainly be no doubt as to his

meaning, as he distinctly tells us that "the more elevated power of speech which the orchestra was debarred from exercising in opera it tried to acquire in absolute music."

Absolute music, therefore, not only lost the immense advantage of Wagner's support, but suffered the further misfortune of becoming his *bête noire;* though the two disadvantages may perhaps be viewed as one —no medium being consistent with Wagner's natural earnestness of character. Taking matters as they stood, therefore, whatever an absolute musician did was wrong. If in the overture an attempt was made to epitomise the musical material to follow—a course very natural to be adopted with the mere intention of thereby providing an appropriate introduction—Wagner held this to be an ostentatious application of the "warning sensation"; and that, too, on the part of composers who had probably never heard of the "warning sensation" in their lives. But, even if we regard the idea represented by "warning sensation" to be instinctive, we should still be a long way from sharing Wagner's view. He tells us, for example, that in the customary opera overture the absolute musician was lured by that confidence which is peculiar to absolute music into trying to spread out the "warning sensation" over the whole opera; yet at the time of his writing this it would seem to be extremely doubtful if anyone had ever heard of this "confidence peculiar to absolute music" before. But what is even more curi-

ous is that Wagner himself calls Mozart the "most absolute of all musicians" and yet admits that he sacrificed his quality of absolute musician completely in favour of the texts which he undertook to set. He tells us expressly that Mozart so took the poet's aim in hand as to develop purely musical means to so remarkable an extent, that none of his absolute instrumental compositions presented so rich a development of musical art as his operas; his inspiration making a bright and enlightening appearance only when illuminated from without; so that it would have fallen to the lot of this *most absolute of all musicians* to have long since solved the opera problem if the right poet had been forthcoming.

In regarding Wagner's triumphs as the point of departure for solution of the greater problem, moreover, we are paying him homage by following his own plan. We are setting before ourselves an ideal project of the nature of problem—exactly as he did in the case of opera, as above described. We are selecting a fixed point of departure for the journey—just as he, in claiming to be the successor of Beethoven, made the emotional struggle of absolute music and its ultimate union with text in the Ninth Symphony the point of departure for his own special work. And we are regarding sensuous expression as having culminated with him, in the same way that he regarded absolute music on traditional lines to have culminated with Beethoven.

That Beethoven was impelled to the introduction of text by instinctively feeling the want of a higher expression we join with Wagner in believing; but whether in making that choice Beethoven was really adopting the *only possible means* is precisely what the greater musical problem provides for us to solve. That such was the case in Wagner's view is, of course, well known; but it may nevertheless be useful to recall the terms in which that opinion is expressed.

Wagner tells us that such introduction of text was, for absolute musicians, a necessity; because musicians who wish to make a clear communication to Feeling by tonal sounds could only do so by reducing the endless powers at their command, and by employing them upon a very limited scale. When Beethoven therefore indited the choral melody of the "Ninth," it was as if he said:

> That is the only way in which we absolute musicians can make what we have to say intelligible.

Were we certain of this there would be no "greater problem" to solve; but there are many reasons for not being so, one of the principal of which is that Wagner's own base of conclusion—that of gesture and speech-verse having formed the exclusive foundation of absolute music—cannot be accepted as axiomatic. Even if we confine our survey to the period of close association between absolute music and rigid metrical conditions it does not follow that association must

necessarily mean dependence. There can of course be no possible problem as to what *has been*, but only as to what *might be;* for which reason it is irrelevant to say, as Wagner does:

> Show me a music which has not been borrowed—

for, notwithstanding that we should be quite able to do that, the entire non-existence of any such music would but add to the incentive to discover whether that condition of things was due to impossibility or to insufficient exploration of the subject. There is so much the less reason to complain of these objections that it is principally Wagner himself, as a result of his marvellous insight into the workings of Beethoven's mind, who has inspired them. When, for example, he tells us that "in his later works Beethoven passes over that Absolute-musical which is recognised as intelligible, in order to speak in a language which often seems like pure musical whimsical unbridledness," it is he who fires us with the earnest desire to know what Beethoven intended thereby. With all our veneration for Wagner, moreover, it is impossible to regard otherwise than as a *petitio principii* his further remark that what Beethoven was trying to do cannot be expressed in music. According to Wagner himself the works of this period were "experiments in forming a language for his longing"—experiments "often appearing as sketches for a painting, about the *object*

of which the master was decided, but not about the *intelligent disposition of details.*"

It is upon that intelligent disposition of details that everything depends. Whether, had Beethoven's genius been destined to guide us still further he would have done so by following the path which Wagner has indicated—whether therefore it was really that great master's intention to assign to music the position of "purely-womanly" element as Wagner has done—or whether Beethoven, having already imparted to absolute music a greater precision of meaning than had hitherto been dreamed of, would have gone on to prove it capable of further advance in the same direction—that we can never know until a new Beethoven shall arise.

It is the possibility of this which raises the present inquiry from being one merely of metaphysical interest to the position of bearing practically upon musical progress. It is only by keeping the conditions of the problem continually in evidence—only, so to speak, if the map be preserved showing the position in space which this as yet undiscovered country should occupy—that we can hope so to impress young minds that ultimately there shall be found one to rise up and deliver us. In the meantime therefore it behoves us to cherish the slight glimpses of Beethoven's method which we possess; and, specially, those to which Wagner has drawn our attention; believing that the genius of Beethoven having discovered the opening of the

road was a fact thoroughly appreciated by Wagner; and that the genius to come will corroborate them both.

(C) HIS VIEWS CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO A HIGHER MUSICAL PROBLEM.

By continuing to adopt Wagner's own reasoning we shall best show that no real conflict with him is created by regarding the point of departure presented at the close of Beethoven's career in two ways; as one not only justifying the road taken by Wagner himself in respect of Opera, but also possibly justifying another road hereafter to be followed in respect of absolute music. In pursuance of that plan the glimpses to be taken of Beethoven's method will be in the form of expressions used by Wagner himself in support of his own exclusive views; expressions which, it is believed, will prove upon examination equally to support the theory of Beethoven having been engaged in the creation of a purely independent musical idiom. He tells us for example that "Beethoven merely took the narrow form and broke it up beforehand by springing it asunder into its component parts, in order to reunite them by the power of organic creation into a new whole."

Here we have the description of a process eminently suggesting new powers of masculine expression; and one only to be considered as exclusively favouring the

Wagner theory by limiting its application to absolute music to the period prior to the "parting of the ways." Elsewhere, moreover, Wagner admits absolute music to a vocation, even in Opera; for how else can we interpret the following words?

> The vivifying central point of dramatic expression is the actor's verse-melody to which absolute orchestral melody is drawn as a warning preparation and away from which the "thought" of the orchestral motive leads as a remembrance.

It is quite certain that the vocation here assigned to absolute music can have nothing to do with any adverse influence, such as may have been in view when Wagner tells us that "everything which exercised a decisive influence upon opera-form came exclusively from the region of absolute music." We are therefore left in the belief that Beethoven's method as above described might even be of greater interest to the absolute musician than to any other.

But in another passage Wagner supports his own view in terms which, even more distinctly, favour the opinion that Beethoven had really the design of extending the defining power of absolute music. He says that "the means adopted by Beethoven was to place the component parts of several melodies in various positions of contact, as if to exemplify the organic relation between them"; and that "he thus reveals to us only the inner organism of absolute music." Upon this the question naturally arises—What more edifying process could we possibly have

expected, had Beethoven's object been openly and professedly to raise absolute music to greater definiteness of expression?

Then again, when allusion is made to absolute orchestral melody as constituting both a warning preparation and a remembrance of the actor's verse-melody, we all recognise the poetical beauty of the application; but we also recognise that Wagner draws no argument in favour of absolute music therefrom, as he easily might have done, considering that a great severity is always directed against it in the opposite case. It would almost seem as if absolute music ceased to be "absolute" when used artistically, but that it at once regained that character upon happening to make itself ridiculous by misapplication. The following passage will enable the reader to judge whether this is really the case; or whether, as we would much rather believe, the words are capable of being explained otherwise.

> The decoration by mere absolute music of situations of abatement and preparation (such as those which the selfish parade of music has caused to find favour in the Opera in the way of "Ritornelli," interludes and even in song accompaniment) cancels all pretence of unity of expression absolutely; directing the sympathy of the sense of hearing to the musical statement no longer as an expression, but rather, so to speak, as the thing expressed.

There is nothing here to attract attention as regards the mere statement of fact. But, so considered, the passage remains simply one of many in which descrip-

tion of the abuse of absolute music is left to work its way in the reader's mind; no stress whatever being laid upon instances of correct use. Taken by itself this feature might not bear special meaning; but something of the same kind occurs in connection with "tone-painting," and here again we must carefully place the reader in a position to judge for himself.

It would have been natural to suppose that "tone-painting" as, in some sense, an application of music in its "womanly" vocation, would have escaped animadversion. But the fact of the poet's verbal expression being dispensed with in this case appears to make all the difference—and far be it from us to urge that the difference is otherwise than great. But let Wagner speak. He tells us that "the obvious outcome of the development of our absolute instrumental music has been what is called "tone-painting"; which in consequence of addressing itself no longer to Feeling, but merely to Fantasy, has sensibly cooled that art's expression."

The idea seems to be that "tone-painting" does not *illustrate* at all; but that "effects" are gathered promiscuously, to which a suitable title is afterwards applied. Yet, it is difficult to see how the merits or the range of absolute music are affected, either way. Each process is a groping in the direction of exploring music's unaided power of expression; and what is wanted is to know why the same kind of use of this expression should be so blameworthy in tone-painting

which is praiseworthy in those opera-moments of abatement and expectation where the conditions are practically the same; as, in each case, the poet's verbal expression is equally absent.

We have already variously alluded to the use made by Wagner of his dogma that absolute music is founded entirely upon gesture and speech-verse. We have now to confront another such tenet; which if admitted would be fatal to the higher hopes of the absolute musician. Wagner's rejection of Fantasy appears already from the last quotation, but not with a sufficient fullness of expression to reveal the strength of such a tenet as a hindrance to the development of absolute music. We gather this far better from a passage where Wagner tells us that our absolute instrumental speech had to derive the sensuous situations of its expression from dance-rhythm and folk-song; absolute instrumental composers endeavouring to raise what was indefinite to distinctness by means of crescendo, diminuendo, accellerando, rallentando and so forth—as well as by differences of *timbre;* finally resorting to unmusical means in order to make the whole clear.

In his description of what absolute musicians *had to do* Wagner stands upon firm ground; and our agreement with him is so much the more thorough that we conceive the present greater musical problem to consist of deciding *what more they have to do.* Even the principle of the rejection of Fantasy in drama is so

entirely undisputed that our only reason for dismissing it shortly is that it forms no part of our immediate concern. But to insist upon the rejection of fantasy in absolute music is quite another matter; for it would cancel every hope, and relegate all notion of a greater musical problem to the category of insane imaginings. But we must allow for the fierceness of the battle in which Wagner was engaged, and for the fact that it was absolute music which most obviously stood between him and victory. Far from complaining of his severity, absolute musicians should be thankful for a criticism from which they have learned, and still hope to reap, so much.

The fact is that none knew better than Wagner himself that the use of imagination was not to be condemned. Does he not describe to us its vast employment upon the original Shakespeare stage, and practically acknowledge that only by its means could the same amount of incident have been included? He is severe of course upon what he calls "that miserable shadow of an art-work which consists of the literary poem's address, not to the senses, but only to the imagination"; but even from Opera his rejection of Fantasy was not absolute. In proof of this we may instance the passage where he says that "in perfecting the art-work the senses should be appealed to rather than fancy; so as to give the latter a sure and intelligible, in place of an uncertain, action."

It is time now to approach the summing up of these

observations. Does a musical problem exist greater than any which has yet engaged attention? A problem depending for its solution upon whether Beethoven really reached (as Wagner says he did) the extreme power of absolute music in respect of precise expression? Is the interpretation placed by Wagner upon the introduction of text and song into the Ninth Symphony so exclusively correct as to cancel all possibility of Beethoven having intended, and therefore of some future Beethoven being capable of, proceeding still further into the domain of precise and independent tonal expression? Is Wagner himself to be counted as an opponent on principle of these ideas? Or, was his opposition to absolute music the result—partly of his concentration upon Opera, where the vocation of music is not absolute, and partly of the fact of absolute musicians mostly standing in the way of his ambition?

Furthermore, do the Beethoven methods which Wagner describes and which resulted in increased precision of meaning admit of further development in the same sense? Does the *universal* nature of Music's appeal to the emotions stand in the way of increased precision of meaning—seeing that each special manifestation of articulate expression is irrevocably confined within *national* bounds? Is any world-wide convention as to the signification of musical devices and developments capable of being built out of the suggestiveness which already exists?

Music, as Wagner tells us, suddenly upraised and

extended itself to such colossal dimensions that the absolute musician lost courage at finding himself wafting without object, and seeing nothing before him but an endless sea of possibilities. It is those possibilities which we have to realise; the above and many more questions being due to that precious earnestness on Wagner's part which carried him beyond his object, causing him, even though inadvertently, to sow the seed of ideas which (however strangely sounding for the moment) may in good time bear fruit a hundredfold.

IV.

WAGNER AND THE POET.

(A) HIS VIEWS OF THE EVOLUTION OF SPEECH.

IT is curious that the subject of the "poet" as presented by Wagner himself should when strictly examined reveal so many striking affinities between articulate and tonal language all to the advantage of the latter as a medium for increased definite communication; and the more so when we remember that this happens in spite of the opposite direction of the main current of his argument. Our general disregard of this important question is doubtless due to the fact that we are so accustomed to think of tonal sound as limited to an emotional expression as to be unprepared to put forth the mental effort necessary to an inquiry into it, or even to accept it as an open one at all. As such an inquiry however cannot fail to prove useful to us whether leading to any modification of our present opinions or no the following observations will be found sufficiently justified in any event.

By way of building upon ideas with which we are

already familiar, the *interjection* may be mentioned as a feature held in common by articulate and tonal language—though only in the sense of such interjections as are strictly limited to the vowel-sound; such as Eh? (inquiry), Ah! (surprise, joy, pity or complaint), Oh! (the same), Ugh! (repugnance) and so forth. So far as these spontaneous utterances depend for their expression upon force, duration, variety of tone, acuteness or gravity tonal sound, as we have it now under control, is immeasurably ahead of the human voice. On the other hand the human sympathy enlisted on behalf of the latter by the addition of facial expression and gesture is such as not only to counterbalance the advantage of a superior appeal to the mere sense of hearing but to transfer the balance to the other side. We have therefore to recognise at the onset that when we speak of articulate language we do not usually mean *that only*, but an association of it with both play of the features and movements of the limbs; and that when it has been elevated by these means into becoming as it were a part of ourselves, the conditions necessary to all just comparison are too disturbed for any reliance to be placed upon conclusions so obtained. The first essential of any correct reasoning is obviously an equalisation of the conditions; and even were it possible to invent a means whereby the tonal language might receive a like assistance before comparing its expressiveness with that of articulate speech the only result would be to encumber the inquiry by questions

as extraneous to one as to the other. In all that concerns the communication effected by articulate sound therefore we have the *audible means employed* exclusively in view; either when written and addressed to us as in a book, or when spoken within our hearing, say by an invisible means.

By thus equalising the conditions the view of the elemental interjection presents tonal sound as in a position of advantage; but this counts for very little, as articulation cannot truly be said to commence until the consonant appears. Its only value is to establish a firm point of departure (the tonal utterance of the elemental interjection appertaining equally to the subjects we have to compare), and to show also that in this respect we are in agreement with Wagner's own view.

He tells us that the most primitive medium of utterance of the inner man is the tonal language, as the most involuntary expression of a feeling awakened within him by exterior causes; saying that in any case the first human mode of expression was one similar to that which is still peculiar to brute animals, and that we can substantially realise this for ourselves at any moment by removing the dumb consonants from our articulate speech and allowing only the sounding vowels to remain.

It is right however to point out that in our view as compared with that of Wagner the necessities of the case have given rise to two divergencies; neither however signifying any antagonism, and each arising out

of the respective nature of the inquiry pursued. These are that firstly, as Wagner had only the Opera-subject before him, it follows that to him articulate speech and gesture were as one, whereas from the different nature of our object we are bound to separate them; and, secondly, that the limitations of a single idiom of articulate speech were as nothing to him for the same reason, whereas they are everything to us, and we are bound to keep that fact in view.

A few words with regard to these reservations before we proceed. Gesture is a sort of *universal* language in itself, and therefore goes far to overstep the limit prescribed to each language by its *national* idiom. For this reason all combination of the two would tend to vitiate the abstract inquiry into how far articulate speech may be regarded as a means of precise communication, seeing that in such case we should be prevented from knowing how much of the expression was due to speech and how much to gesture. Then, as regards idiom, however definite we may allow the expression of articulate speech to be, *universality* is precisely that to which it has never even pretended to attain; whilst tonal language, however indefinite it may still remain, is beyond dispute in full possession of the precious attribute of universal appeal. Moreover, although we do not know to what degree of increased precision the language of tones may yet progress, we know quite well that all attempts to uni-

versalise articulate speech have entirely failed; as for example in the cases of Volapuk and Esperanto.

But that is by no means all; for it follows from the fact of human articulate speech being broken up into national idioms that each of these expresses something which *the others cannot*, and that each one must therefore be necessarily an imperfect medium for the communication of human thought and feeling. Thus, it frequently occurs to persons having the facility of several languages to eke out one by the other; and this, not as the unthinking may suppose, to air their superior knowledge, but because of the consciousness thus caused that, otherwise, certain *nuances* of thought and feeling would be obliged to remain unexpressed. Whilst, therefore, we shall agree with Wagner to the full extent of his statement the above reservations are justly made on behalf of the tonal language.

He disregards chronologic sequence by merely taking the *necessary* evolution of speech in hand; and the next stage of this being in his view the spontaneous combination of vowel succession with gesture is also one with which (gesture notwithstanding) the tonal language can easily compete. Pure tonal sound being admittedly of vowel-character, it is only the musical equivalent for gesture which we have here as it were to provide; and though, as already pointed out, this is an element lying altogether outside the abstract question, it must not be supposed that tonal expression is lacking in means to meet the case; besides which in

attempting an equivalent to gesture it does so from its own resources; whereas, to articulate language, gesture is a thing added. Some of the resources of tonal sound alluded to are: emphasis, rhythmic collocation, crescendo, diminuendo, accellerando, rallentando, legato, staccato, the mental effect attaching to various intervals, and so forth; these sufficing, say, for expression of the forceful blow, graceful advance or retirement and soothing hand-motion; also, the uplifting gesture of surprise, the trembling of fear, the falling of despondency, the outstretch of expectation, the piquancy of tip-toe step, the firm tread of determination, or the daintiness of the pirouette. These features are mentioned, firstly, in order to point out that, in excluding gesture from the comparison, it is not intended to be implied that tonal sound is altogether helpless in that respect; but principally to draw attention to a form of gesture with which no development of tonal expression (whatever the future may have in store) can ever by any possibility enable it to compete; that being *facial expression.*

We have now brought the two media practically abreast, so far as this elementary stage of the matter is concerned; the outcome appearing, on the whole, to be rather to the advantage of tonal expression. It is precisely this initial advantage which makes it natural at this point to inquire:

"Whence then arises the crowning distinction which not only nullifies this initial advantage possessed by

the tonal language—but relegates its expression to the subordinate position which Wagner assigns to it?" Upon this point we prefer to take the master's own words.

He says that Feeling was now obliged to clothe the sounding-vowel in a distinguishing garment, and to do this in such a way as to derive the garment from the impression of the object and therefore practically from the object itself. This garment was woven of dumb consonants, which were used as commencement or termination of the vowel-sound, or as both together; and, by fitting into it so as to enclose it, they presented it in such a way as to hold it to one definite and distinct announcement; just as distinct objects themselves are exteriorly and separately enclosed or announced, also by means of a garment: as, for example, the beast by his hide; the tree by its bark; and so forth.

At a superficial glance, therefore, it would appear that the barrier between music and more definite expression is the former's lack of an equivalent within its own domain for this "consonantal clothing" of the vowel, as possessed by articulate speech. But we have only to contemplate the result, in the event of its being possible to institute such an equivalent, in order to perceive that this is not the case. An articulate speech consists, not of nouns alone, nor even of an aggregation of parts of speech; but also of an *idiom*, or special distribution of the elements of thought. No "clothing" of the tonal sound could therefore in-

fluence it as a means of expression, unless associated with all other components of language; and these can no more be *invented* for tonal, than they have been for articulate, speech. Any such attempt would be absurd, and could never attain either to acceptance or even common respect. But, even were we, for argument sake, to suppose such a thing possible, the universal character of tonal expression would be destroyed by basing it upon a special idiom of articulate speech; even if its effect could any longer be tolerated after rendering it subservient to an arrangement in which beauty could no more be considered.

When we arrive at the "clothing of the vowel," therefore, we arrive at the spot where articulate and tonal language definitively part company; each to follow its own course. In future they may associate, each to the other's advantage. They may even blend so perfectly as to form to all intents and purposes one speech. But for all that they are not one, but two.

(B) HIS FURTHER VIEWS OF THE EVOLUTION OF SPEECH.

From this point we have to follow singly the courses taken respectively by tonal and articulate language, but in doing so we quickly discover that for a time at least their roads though separate lie parallel. The original separation arose at the "consonantal clothing

of the vowel," which, in Wagner's words, "held it to one definite and distinct announcement"; music being withheld from this, not for want of actual means of enclosing its tones in some kindred manner, but because of any such process being altogether opposed to its character and mission.

The more the range of an articulate speech is narrowed the more precise it becomes, so that if articulate speech in any one form could be made universal it would be obliged to loosen in respect of definite meaning. As no universal articulate idiom exists we must seek illustration in another direction. Thus within the limits of separate nationalities there are classes to whom certain modes of expression are clearer than any others, even down to the followers of distinct occupations who commonly resort to the use of terms and phrases which are of special clearness to *them.* This points to the fact that it is really the "universal" character of the tonal language which subjects it to the loosening influence; and if so the question is shown therefore to be—not whether it can, by "clothing" its sounds, make them stand for material objects and afterwards subject them to some system as it were of "accidence" or other concomitants of ordinary speech, but whether its own universal idiom, the precise meaning of which has been so enormously advanced through the achievements of Beethoven, may be still further cultivated in *the same direction;* and, if so, how far.

We have said that for a time the course of tonal is

parallel with that of articulate language; taking the latter of course in the sense of that elevated expression which arose in obedience to the poetic instinct, and which, as the next stage in his classification, Wagner introduces in the following manner.

When speech began to combine roots according to their similarity and relationship his view is that it rendered the impression of the object clear to Feeling in the same degree as the expression made use of to denote it, through the latter being correspondingly increased in strength. In this way it indicated the object itself as strengthened; or, in other words, as one which, though admittedly manifold, was nevertheless by its nature (as exhibited in similarity and relationship) one only in character. This poetising impulse of speech gave rise to alliteration or initial rhyme.

This explanation exhibits both the pride and the defect of articulate speech, which can fix the material object and describe it in any given relationship *but only to the understanding*; in order to pass beyond which stage it is obliged to draw upon a super-imposed means. The parallel case of the tonal language is shown by the fact that in like circumstance it can fix the emotion and influence it as desired *but only as towards Feeling*; in order to pass beyond which stage it will have to discover a means which even if superimposed will be no more than articulate speech has already adopted in the case of alliteration—a vener-

able expedient truly, but one impossible to be considered as directly appertaining to language itself. The truth of this may be easily shown by taking Wagner's own description in paraphrase, in which case the entire reasoning which he applies to articulate speech will be found equally to apply to the tonal language: as thus.

When music began to combine motives according to their similarity and relationship his view would then read as being that the impression of the object was rendered clear to the Intellect in the same degree as the expression made use of to denote it, through the latter being correspondingly increased in strength. In this way it indicated the emotion itself as strengthened; or, in other words, as one which, though admittedly manifold, was nevertheless by its nature (as exhibited in similarity and relationhip) one only in character. This reasoning impulse of music is shown in sequence, or rhyming of the motive.

Musical sequence is here selected in order, by completing the paraphrase, to render it intelligible. But it will also serve to draw attention to the fact that alliteration is really a *musical* effect; and that the closer the alliteration (or the shorter the sequence, as the case may be) the more evident the affinity becomes. The only difference to be noted is that the whole "sensation" is one of which the tonal expression is capable of far more extension and meaning than the articulate. By means of the latter we can only contrast such opposed sensations—say, as:

Pleasure and pain—weal and woe

though even then a childish monotony would be the immediate result of any undue extension. On the other hand it is characteristic of the musical sequence to involve transient modulations by which this monotony is avoided; or, at any rate, considerably postponed; the result being that the binding influence of the sequence goes far beyond that of alliteration, and is capable of being spread over a sentence in which, for fear of monotony the alliteration of ordinary speech would require relief. Wagner himself furnishes us with a case of this kind in the lines:

> Die Liebe bringt Lust und Leid,
> Doch in ihr Weh auch webt sie Wonnen;

where, for the avoidance of monotony, the poet has been obliged to change the alliteration from *l* in the first line to *w* in the second. In this, which may be fairly represented in English by:

> Love proffers both pleasure and pain,
> Yet from the woe she weaves her wonders.

Wagner here calls our attention to the word "weaves" as a return to the first or *pleasurable* sensation; and adds:

This sensation could only be effected by the poet's representing it to the sensuous appreciation of Feeling as a stepping forward from the sensation of "woe" to that of "wonders"; whereas the musician by simply going back to the first key effectively unifies the whole sensation of the species.

The poet's change of alliteration was thus destructive of the unity he *must* have desired, which he was obliged to renounce, but which the musician is able to restore. From this it follows that although alliteration may be admitted as an ornament of speech the sensation to which it refers it far better interpreted by absolute music.

It is a welcome trait of Wagner's reasoning that, although he has every desire to extol articulate speech at the cost of absolute music, this does not lead him to any self-deception as to the character of articulate speech separately considered. We have already described articulate speech as borrowing whatever means it could in order to eke out a defective expression—whether facial expression, gesture or intonation; and to these we have therefore now to add alliteration. That this corresponds with Wagner's admissions is well shown by the analogy in which he represents articulate speech as "the child who, forsaking father and mother, went out in the world to do as best he could"; the precocious youngster being next found as above described in the act of purloining "terminal rhyme"—an *obviously musical effect.* That "terminal rhyme" is really such will be sufficiently evident from the fact that it is productive of euphony alone, that it is devoid of even the slightest relation to meaning, and therefore of the justification, which attaches to alliteration. So far as it can be connected with meaning at all that happens only by way of

"assonance"; as in the expressions "right and might," to "rest and rust," to "mend or end"; and so forth. These however are practically alliterations, and have not contributed to that corrupting influence of terminal rhyme which arose as a consequence of this encroachment of articulate speech upon the musical domain. This view of terminal rhyme will be found entirely to agree with Wagner; who, for example, in one place says of it that:

> It no longer cemented the natural bond of articulate and tonal speech, in which radical relationship to those melodic intonations possessed by initial rhyme intelligibly exhibited both exterior and interior sense; but it contented itself with fluttering loosely at the close of each melodic band, and there the verse always assumed a position more and more arbitrary and intractable.

This is precisely what shows articulate speech to have proceeded upon lines differing from those of tonal expression, the latter having never at all events borrowed from exterior sources to its own disfigurement. The subsequent course taken by ordinary speech was that of the distortion of original roots whereby they were made to cover an interminable subdivision of conventional meanings; loss of the "frank" character of primitive speech being a natural result. Equally natural was it that humanity should next be driven by the conditions of modern life to seek relief in *super*-emotional music; and the same natural forces are still at work to render the future progress of tonal more and more contrary to that of

articulate speech. The latter is described by Wagner as "supported by mechanical apparatus specially provided with screws and levers to regulate the circumstantial application of various meanings"; and the analogy is true. Moreover, in the same way that this speech becomes by degrees thus removed from the more direct expression of feeling, the tonal language is continually aspiring more effectually to fill its place. That articulate speech can never regain its primitive traits, being hopelessly caught up by the whirl and stress of modern life with its continual innovations, surprises, and ever increasingly strenuous modes of thought —is well expressed by Wagner when he says that:

> We speak a language which we do not stipulate for as connected with Feeling. We speak it just as it has been taught to us from our earliest years, but not after the manner of grasping nourishing and shaping which belongs to our grown-up independence of feeling, or which proceeds either from ourselves or from the objects in question. Our language rests upon a convention which in France under Louis XIV was made secure by an academy subject to "order." It possesses no basis of conviction of any enduring present or sympathetic character. We cannot even speak with one another through its medium in such a way as to accord with our *innermost* feeling. It enables us to communicate our feelings, but only to the understanding; and not in the implicit confidence which attaches to Feeling.

This forms the boundary beyond which we cannot go, however our thoughts may wander out in search of possibilities; though we may still follow the separate course of articulate speech. Future increase of

tonal expression must necessarily be a development of absolute music—of that music in which the sympathy of the sense of hearing is invoked not for itself alone, but on behalf of both intellect and feeling; and not as a mere clothing of what is otherwise expressed, but as itself the complete expression of what is intended to be conveyed. This is precisely what Wagner found to be a preposterous pretension, calling it a mere "selfish parade" of music, and declaring all pretence of unity of expression to be at once cancelled by its appearance. Whether this be the case must depend upon whether, in the proper sense, such expression is *possible at all*; for, if possible, it is certain that quite an ideal unity of expression is to be obtained by the use of a *single medium*, and above all by a medium capable of both delivering and beautifying its message at the same time.

In the next place whatever competition with articulate speech may in future be set up by the tonal language must apply to the *poetised form* of the former's expression. We derive this impression from the fact that already an approximation to music takes place whenever speech increases its reliance upon *tone* for producing an effect. It becomes important therefore to observe what Wagner has to say generally as to the poetic element in our nature.

He tells us that we are poets in two senses—both by intuition and communication; intuition causing us to resolve what we see or otherwise experience into an

inner picture—to the reproduction of which for the benefit of others we are also naturally impelled.

Now this act of resolving what we experience into an inner picture is one of *condensation*; and it is important to note how far this view corresponds with the poetic element in speech; as well as how far the mere use of condensing methods may be accepted as constituting an approach to music.

Wagner tells us that the natural tendency of intellect is to *separate*—but of feeling to *unite*. He pictures intellect as taking the class and subdividing it —while feeling reinstates the whole again as one class. And here he expressly says that the poet attained to this unity through his elevation of word verse into vocal melody and that this was a safe proceeding on account of tonal sounds as associated in a relationship being instinctively accepted by the senses.

And so the case stands: poetised articulate speech adding to the precision of its meaning by the engrafting of musical methods, but tonal speech having nothing which it can borrow from articulate and consequently nothing to hope for but what may arise from the development of its own resources. The form which that development is destined to take, the lines upon which it is likely to proceed and the sum total of result which may be possible to be achieved are not only secrets of the future, but constitute the most engrossing artistic problem of our day.

[THE END.]

Printed by The New Temple Press, 17 Grant Road, Croydon.

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
3 1197 00665 8246

DATE DUE

APR 6 1982
APR 1 6 RECT
FEB 1 5 1983
NOV 1 4 1983
MAR 1 5
FEB 0 7 1985
OCT 3 1985
SEP 2 6 1986
JAN 2 7 1986
FEB 1 3 1986
MAR 1 0 1986
MAR 1 1 1986
MAR 3 0 1987
APR 9 1987
APR 1 2 1990
APR 1 0 1990
MAY 0 2 1991
DEC 1 3 2002
DEC 1 2 2002
JUL 2 0 2017

DEMCO 38-297